



Idaho Public Utilities Commission

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Paul Kjellander, Commissioner
Mack A. Redford, Commissioner
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Case No. FSI-T-14-01, Order No. 33226

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www.puc.idaho.gov

First Step Internet granted ETC status; hopes to expand broadband in rural areas

BOISE (Feb. 24, 2015) – A Moscow-based company seeking to qualify for federal funds to expand broadband services in rural parts of Idaho has been granted conditional Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) status by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission.

The conditional ETC status is required by the Federal Communications Commission by no later than March 5 for telecommunications providers who hope to qualify for federal funding as part of the FCC's Rural Broadband Experiments. The FCC will allocate about \$4.5 billion over a five-year period to new advanced networks in rural and insular communities. ETC status is granted by state commissions after the companies meet specified criteria.

First Step Internet is a facilities-based regional Internet Service Provider that will use a combination of its own network and facilities as well as resale of another carrier's services. Kevin Owen of Moscow is listed as president on the company's application.

First Step Internet will offer a variety of services including dial-up, DSL, fiber, cable Internet, fixed wireless broadband services and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP). The service area for which the company requested ETC designation includes some 27 communities and surrounding rural areas in north and central Idaho.

To be declared an ETC by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission, First Step Internet had to meet a number of criteria including customer access to emergency services such as 911 and enhanced 911. The company must also have a reasonable amount of back-up power to ensure functionality without an external power source, be able to re-route traffic around damaged facilities and be capable of managing traffic spikes resulting from emergencies. It must contribute to the Idaho Telephone Assistance Program for low-income customers, E-911 emergency fund, the state Universal Service Fund and the Telecommunications Relay Service for those with hearing and speech disabilities.

The company must further demonstrate that the ETC is in the public interest by increasing customer choice and making available new service offerings including wireless broadband. It must also comply with the state's consumer protection and service quality standards.

The commission's final order, along with the company's application and other documents, are available on the commission's Website at www.puc.idaho.gov. Click on "Open Cases" under the "Telecommunications" heading and scroll down to Case No. FSI-T-14-01.

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